

# ConnectiCOSH

## CT COUNCIL ON OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY & HEALTH

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Written Testimony of  
Michael C. Fitts  
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Before the Connecticut General Assembly  
Education Committee  
February 23, 2009  
Testimony in support of **HB 6496**  
**"AN ACT Concerning Green Cleaning in schools."**

The Connecticut Council on Occupational Safety and Health (ConnectiCOSH) is a member organization of the Coalition for a Safe and Healthy Connecticut. I am usually trying to help make workplaces safer for workers. Today I'm hoping to help improve the quality of life for our children. I'll start with some statistics about chemicals that are used in the work place and in products that we use every day. The chemical manufacturers would like us to believe that we are safe and the current system is fine. You be the judge.

For the most part chemicals are not regulated nearly as well as they should be in work places. Since its inception in 1970 OSHA has lowered the Permissible Exposure limits on fewer than 40 chemicals!

Only 284 chemicals have been peer reviewed by NIOSH. Of those 144 are known carcinogens, OSHA regulates only 53 and of them, only 21 are specifically targeted as carcinogens!

Every chemical that exists or is invented is assigned a "C A S" (Chemical Abstract Service) number. This number is unique to that chemical (I often describe it as a fingerprint). No two chemicals share the same number. According to the CAS registry website, currently over 39 million organic and inorganic substances have been assigned CAS #'s. If you scroll down the page, the site states that over 4000 new chemicals are listed every day!

I know that the problem is big when you consider the statistics that I have used here and the legislation you are considering would only regulate a hand full of

toxic chemicals used to clean our schools. However, this would at least be a good faith effort on your part to protect our kids, teachers, custodians and other staff that work in our schools.

We strongly support this bill because, not only will it protect our children, but it will also protect the custodians that currently use the toxic chemicals now and are exposed at a much higher levels. HB 6496 would help eliminate the toxic chemicals (some of which are carcinogens) and replace them with safer alternatives!

What about the future? How can we try to deal with a situation that has clearly gotten out of control?

We are not the only ones facing this problem. The European Union which is made up of 27 nations uses a practice known as "No Data, No Access" which means that manufacturers must produce data that shows that products are safe before they can bring them to the market place. This is an interesting concept. They may be onto something here. It seems to me, that placing the burden of proof on the companies that stand to profit from the sale of the products is a better idea than waiting until people are showing symptoms, getting scientists (usually paid for by the government) to do research then asking the legislature to take the necessary action to remove a product that never should have been there in the first place!

Although the European Union seems to be going in the right direction on this problem, I would like to wrap up by saying we live in the greatest country in the world! We should be the ones taking the lead on this and showing the world that we care more about our children and our workers than anyone else and we are going to take the steps needed to prove it!

Michael C. Fitts

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